



September 6, 2012

Mayor Lore Christopher
Commissioner David McKane
Commissioner Brandon Smith
Commissioner Mark Caillier
Commissioner Cathy Clark
Commissioner Joe Egli
Commissioner Jim Taylor

Re: City of Keizer Resolution related to youth councilor position

Dear Mayor Christopher and Commissioners:

I am writing to express disappointment over the Resolution passed by Council on August 20, 2012, that added Section 17.8 to the City Council Rules of Procedure. I apologize for not providing comments prior to the vote – I was not aware that the issue was being proposed – and I thank you for your time now to consider my comments. I ask that you move to repeal Section 17.8 of the Rules and, until that repeal is passed, that you refrain from implementation of the provision related to the Youth Councilor position.

As you know, in amending the Rules relating to qualifications for Youth Councilors with the City of Keizer, the Resolution requires applicants for that position to be U.S. Citizens. Whether intentional or not, the Council's action to exclude all non-citizen youth from this program tells the community that it is permissible for government to treat immigrant youth as unequal and inferior to "native-born" youth.

There are many reasons why youth who reside in Keizer may not be U.S. citizens. Yes, some may have been brought to this country by their parents at a young age without proper documentation. But others may well have valid visas or be lawful permanent residents who do not yet qualify to apply for citizenship. Regardless, the great majority of immigrant youth who reside in our state aspire to be U.S. citizens and productive members of our society.

It is the role of government to protect the fundamental rights of everyone – regardless of national origin or immigration status. In calling out a specific group of youth, the Council has taken a step backward. The Council ought to support *all* youth who are engaged, ambitious, and looking for ways to make their community a better place. Instead, the Council has made a statement that immigrant youth are not welcome to apply and should not expect equal opportunity in the City of Keizer.

August 15, 2012 was an important day for all Americans, marking the first day that youth who were brought to this country as children but without the necessary legal documents could apply to live and work openly without fear of deportation. Hugo Nicolas was among the first in Oregon to apply and he joined with others in the community to publicly come out of the shadows and exercise his rights. The Resolution passed by Council just days later sends a strong message to Nicolas, who proudly served as Youth Councilor in the recent past, and to all others who are watching, that Keizer prefers to close its doors to those working hard to overcome adversity. We are deeply disappointed in your action and strongly urge the Council to revisit and reverse its decision.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments. Please feel free to be in touch with me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Straus", with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Becky Straus
Legislative Director